

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1159

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Judiciary

**Title:** An act relating to increasing the number of district court judges in King county.

**Brief Description:** Adding five district court judges in King county.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Goodman, Rodne, Pedersen, White and Upthegrove; by request of Board For Judicial Administration.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Judiciary: 1/19/09, 1/22/09 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Increases the number of statutorily authorized district court judges in King County from 21 to 23 in 2009, from 23 to 25 in 2010, and from 25 to 26 in 2011.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Pedersen, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Flannigan, Kelley, Kirby, Ormsby, Roberts, Ross and Warnick.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Shea, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

**Staff:** Courtney Barnes (786-7194)

**Background:**

The number of district court judges in each county is set by statute. Any change in the number of full- and part-time judges in a county's district court is determined by the Legislature after receiving a recommendation from the Washington State Supreme Court.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The Supreme Court's recommendation is based on an objective workload analysis developed annually by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The objective workload analysis takes into account available judicial resources and the caseload activity of the courts. The AOC may consult with the Board of Judicial Administration and the District and Municipal Court Judges' Association to develop procedures and methods of applying the objective workload analysis.

The AOC completes a judicial impact note, which identifies any cost to the state or local government, for each recommendation to change the number of district court judges in a county. In order for an additional judicial position to become effective, the legislative authority of the affected county must approve the position and agree to pay, out of county funds and without reimbursement from the state, expenses associated with the new position. Changes in the number of district court judges may not be made in a year in which judicial elections for district court are held.

King County has 21 elected district court judges. According to the AOC's objective workload analysis, an increase in the number of district court judges in King County is recommended.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The number of statutorily authorized district court judges in King County is increased from 21 to 23 in 2009, from 23 to 25 in 2010, and from 25 to 26 in 2011.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) King County needs additional district court judges. King County had 26 district court judges until 2002. The number of judges was reduced because of a disagreement concerning whether King County should contract with other cities to provide court services. The cities are now attempting to reduce the fragmentation of the courts by contracting with King County. The county anticipates a significant increase in traffic-related cases due to its contracts with other cities. Additionally, the King County Prosecutor has announced that he will be sending an additional 2,000 drug and property crime cases to district court. The increase in caseload warrants the authorization of additional district court judges.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Goodman, prime sponsor; Mellani McAleenan, Board for Judicial Administration; and Barbara Linde and Rick Bathum, King County District Court.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.